

VZCZCXRO7476
RR RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHLJ #0065 0711210
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 121210Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7211
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 0038
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0128
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0270
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LJUBLJANA 000065

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STATE FOR EUR/ERA, EUR/CE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/11/2019

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SUBJECT: SLOVENIA INTERESTED IN U.S. VIEWS ON SYRIA AND
IRAN FOR MARCH GAERC/GYMNICH

REF: J. GIAUQUE 3/6 E-MAIL

Classified By: ADCM G. Shelton, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

11. (C) ADCM reviewed our points for the March GAERC and Gymnich meetings (ref) with MFA European Correspondent Darja Gruban on March 12. Gruban requested updates on the U.S. position on Syria and Iran, which the EU FMs would discuss at the March 27-28 Gymnich. She expected GAERC conclusions on Bosnia, Belarus and Afghanistan (without discussion), although she said the PSC would meet on March 16 to continue negotiating the conclusions. She said Slovenia agreed with the U.S. points on Sudan and on Israeli-Palestinian peace. Transnistria was not on the agenda in March. End Summary.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

12. (C) Gruban expected the decision about closing OHR to occur at the June PIC. She stressed that the transition to the EUSR needed to be well-prepared, not only within the EU, but also with the international community and Bosnia. She expressed concern about the undermining of the Dayton principles, which was unacceptable. She noted that the discussion about the EUSR's mandate was continuing. The Slovene view was that the mandate needed to be strong and flexible so the EUSR could exert influence on the implementation of the commitments given to the EU.

Montenegro

13. (C) Gruban emphasized that Slovenia would like the FMs to decide in March to ask the Commission to prepare the avis, although she acknowledged that some member states objected that Montenegro was not ready while others were against enlargement. Slovenia viewed this step as technical, not political, and would like it to happen as soon as possible.

Belarus

14. (C) Gruban said that there was an ongoing discussion about whether to prolong the extension of the suspension of the visa ban. Slovenia supported extending the suspension. She noted that while Belarus would participate in the Eastern Partnership, the EU should not invite Lukashenka to attend the May 7 Special Summit, but should instead invite the Foreign Minister.

Middle East

15. (C) Gruban stated that the Foreign Ministers would discuss the Middle East at the GAERC lunch, but most likely in the framework of transatlantic relations because the Czech Presidency planned to brief about the April 5 U.S.-EU Summit in Prague. FMs would not discuss Iran at the GAERC, but they planned to discuss the Middle East, including Iran and Syria, at the Gymnich. She requested more information on our policy toward both Syria and Iran before that meeting.

Other Issues

16. (C) Gruban noted that the March 19-20 European Council Conclusions under the Foreign Affairs heading would be on the Eastern Partnership, with a small reference to the Union for the Mediterranean. She said that the Political Directors would meet on the margins of the GAERC and discuss Sudan as well as the effects of the economic crisis on the EU's eastern neighborhood, with a stress and focus on Ukraine and Moldova.

FREDEN